

What is claimed is:

1. A method for protecting a patient during an endoluminal procedure,  
comprising the steps of:  
advancing a guidewire to a region of interest within a vessel;  
5 advancing a filter and delivery sheath along the guidewire, the filter  
carried by the delivery sheath;  
removing the delivery sheath from the filter, thereby releasing the filter;  
expanding the filter within the region of interest;  
removing the delivery sheath from the region of interest;  
10 advancing a catheter over the guidewire to the region of interest; and  
performing an endoluminal procedure at the region of interest, wherein  
released embolic material is captured by the filter.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:  
removing the catheter from the region of interest;  
15 advancing a capture sheath over the guidewire;  
engaging the filter with the capture sheath; and  
removing the filter and capture sheath from the region of interest.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the filter is placed on a proximal end of  
the guidewire after the step of advancing the guidewire into the region of interest within  
20 the vessel.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of expanding the filter within the region of interest is performed after the step of removing the delivery sheath from the region of interest.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the filter is expanded downstream of the region of interest.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the delivery sheath frictionally engages the filter.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising a second elongate member disposed within the delivery sheath and having a distal end operatively associated with the filter.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the guidewire further comprises a distal stop.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the guidewire further comprises a proximal stop, and wherein the filter is released by withdrawing the tubular sheath until the filter bears against the proximal stop.

10. The method of claim 2, further comprising the steps of:  
advancing a second filter over the guidewire; and  
expanding the second filter within the region of interest.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the filter further comprises a locking  
5 mechanism that is operable to engage the guidewire and is releasable to allow the filter to  
slide along the guidewire, and wherein the method further comprises the step of locking  
the filter.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein the vessel is a carotid artery.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein the vessel is a coronary artery.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein the catheter is an angioplasty catheter.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein the catheter is a stent deployment  
catheter.

16. The method of claim 1, wherein the catheter is an atherectomy catheter.

17. A medical device, comprising:

a guidewire having a proximal end, a distal end, and a stop mounted on the distal end;

a delivery sheath having a proximal end, a distal end, and a lumen

5 therebetween, the delivery sheath slideably engaging the guidewire; and

a filter releasably carried within the lumen of the delivery sheath, the filter slideably engaging the guidewire and removable from the guidewire by sliding the filter proximal on the guidewire,

wherein, in use, the guidewire is positioned within a vessel of a patient, the filter and delivery sheath are advanced along the guidewire to a region of interest within the vessel, and the delivery sheath is removed from the filter to release the filter.

18. The medical device of claim 17, further comprising an endoluminal therapeutic catheter.

19. The medical device of claim 18, wherein the endoluminal therapeutic  
15 catheter is an angioplasty catheter.

20. A method for protecting a patient during an endoluminal procedure,  
comprising the steps of:

advancing a guidewire to a region of interest within a vessel;

advancing a filter and delivery sheath along the guidewire, the filter

5 carried by the delivery sheath;

removing the delivery sheath from the filter, thereby releasing the filter;

expanding the filter within the region of interest;

removing the delivery sheath from the region of interest;

advancing a catheter over the guidewire to the region of interest;

10 performing an endoluminal procedure at the region of interest, wherein

released embolic material is captured by the filter;

removing the catheter from the region of interest;

advancing a capture sheath over the guidewire;

engaging the filter with the capture sheath; and

15 removing the filter and capture sheath from the region of interest.